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*Charles the Bold, Last Duke of Burgundy, 1433-1477.* "Heroes of the Nations." By RUTH PUTNAM. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908. Pp. 484.

According to the author's preface, the admission of Charles of Burgundy to the list of national heroes is justified by his connection with events rather than by his personal qualities, and it has been her task to write the life of a man placed in the foreground by circumstances rather than by character. The reader can hardly be expected to feel the deepest interest in such a hero, but the biographer has at least succeeded in presenting a vivid and scholarly narrative.

The great extent of territory over which Charles ruled, extending as it did in a broken line of rich duchies from Auvergne and Savoy on the south to the coast line of the Netherlands, gave him an influence in European politics that a wiser man might have used to greater effect. It was the dream of the last Burgundian duke to unite his possessions by conquering Lorraine and then to have himself crowned king of the united territories, thus forming a strong state between France and Germany. Foiled in this plan by the astute Louis XI of France, and humiliated by two defeats at the hands of the Swiss, he fell without glory at Nancy when only forty-one years old, and the marriage of his heiress Mary soon transferred the vast Burgundian estates to the control of the House of Austria.

The *Life of Charles the Bold* is in reality a study of political and social conditions in France and the Low Countries during the fifteenth century. It will well repay a reader who wishes to learn of the life of court, castle, and town in the days when feudalism as a political institution was disappearing before the rising spirit of nationality. The author's keen understanding of motive and character, and the gentle humor that underlies much of the story, give the book the justification which its central character fails to assure. Excerpts from contemporary writers give life to the narrative. Especially worthy of notice are the illustrations, thirty-two in number, consisting chiefly of portraits and groups taken from miniatures, all well chosen and admirably reproduced. A map and an index add to the value of the book.

DORA WELLS

CHICAGO NORMAL SCHOOL

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*American Playgrounds: Their Construction, Equipment, Maintenance, and Utility.* By EVERETT B. MERO. Boston: American Gymnasia Co., 1908. Pp. 270. Illustrated.

*American Playgrounds* is a valuable collection of facts and opinions on the general subject of playgrounds. In Part I, it demonstrates the necessity of the playground as a requirement of our civilization. This is a necessary and at present a not too difficult task, as America has been awakened to the importance of play.

Instructions in the matter of placing playgrounds in the most available and useful location follow and in Part II the necessary equipment is stated upon well-recognized and conservative lines.

The rest of the book presents in somewhat abbreviated form the play pro-

cedures commonly used. In reviewing the material one is struck with the fact that all "systems" of physical training as hitherto known have been flung together into one common melting-pot with an alloy resulting which we can designate by no one name. It is appropriate however that this should be so, for racial differences are losing themselves rapidly in the heated turmoil of American life, and the mixture welds itself into the bronze of the type we are glad to call American. Just so has Mr. Mero made his playground suggestions of a mixture we can but call "play." There is and should be no choice or distinction based upon other considerations than function; the day of authority is past and adaptation has taken its place.

The scissors and paste have been judiciously used so that the last part of the book tells almost everything from how to approach the taxpayers on behalf of a playground to the abstract philosophy of play. Each item will no doubt be of use to someone and all the items are of value to the serious student of the subject, even if he is endowed with a sense of humor.

Mr. Mero has certainly given us a book containing much practical information. His prefatory statements that it is a "book of service" and not a literary of use to someone and all the items are of value to the serious student of the subject, even if he is endowed with a sense of humor.

C. WARD CRAMPTON

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
NEW YORK CITY

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*The Rural School in the United States.* By JOHN COULTER HOCKENBURY.  
Published by the Author, Westfield, Mass., 1908. Pp. 124. \$0.75.

This book is a pioneer, a proof in itself of the declaration made in the preface: "There has been a birth of interest in this important subject in the past dozen years." This birth is well said by the author to point to a sphere of influence and activity for educational and social leadership that is unprecedented in our educational history. A strongly felt need of a better understanding of the rural-school problem prompted the author, and, in so far as the fixing in general terms of a fairly reliable background for a more thorough study giving carefully defined conclusions helps to a better understanding, the author admirably accomplishes his purpose.

The body of the book is made up of nine chapters. The first two are intended to mark progress up to date in economic, social, and educational conditions in rural life. The third chapter compares the American rural school with the Prussian, and the fourth chapter contrasts rural- and urban-school conditions in America. Chapters five, six, and seven constitute an attempt to fix the present status of the rural school in the United States. The two concluding chapters forecast future progress. The book is well indexed, and a list of one hundred and thirty-one valuable specific references is added.

The author's discussion of the means in active use promising better economic and social conditions in the country is very good, and lacks only a summarized statement of the contributions already made by the rapidly improving rural school to make it quite complete. In assembling the causes of the rural exodus, the effect of inventions lessening hand labor and increasing the ease of concen-